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LOTTERY SUED

The Virginia Lottery was sued today for contracting with businesses that violate federal law. Four plaintiffs filed suit asking the Lottery to stop doing business with places that are inaccessible to them. The plaintiffs live throughout the state of Virginia, and have been denied access to at least sixteen different lottery vendors.

The suit alleges that the Virginia Lottery, with revenues in excess of a billion dollars, supports businesses that are not available to people with disabilities. Lottery retailers receive five percent of every lottery sale. Retailers earned more than 70 million dollars from lottery sales in 2004.

The suit, *Winborne v. Virginia Lottery*, was filed in the Circuit Court in the City of Richmond today, on the fifteenth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. It names businesses in Roanoke, Salem, Abingdon and Winchester that are in violation of both state and federal laws guaranteeing access to people with disabilities in places that do business with the government. The suit claims violations of the Virginians with Disabilities Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and regulations of the Virginia Lottery itself.

The plaintiffs are represented by the Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy (VOPA). VOPA is the designated agency to protect and advocate for the rights of people with disabilities in Virginia. It is vested with authority, under federal statutes, to seek legal remedies on behalf of people with disabilities when necessary.

“It is just astounding that, fifteen years after the Americans with Disabilities Act became law, many Virginia businesses are still inaccessible to people with disabilities,” said Colleen Miller, the Director of the Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy. “It is unconscionable that Virginia continues to support these violations with the revenues of the Lottery.”

According to the suit, the Lottery surveyed businesses more than five years ago and found that two thousand locations were not accessible to people with disabilities. In spite of this knowledge, the Lottery continued to contract with the businesses. Many of these retailers are also sources of groceries and conveniences in smaller communities in Virginia.

“These same places sell milk and bread and common necessities to their local communities, but bar the door to people with disabilities. The Lottery should not be supporting this blatant disregard of the law,” said Miller.